

My name is Kerry Knop and I live in Ridgefield, Connecticut. I fully support HB5372, An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction Offered in Teacher Preparation Programs.

My son was the first to do just about everything: he could recite his whole alphabet by age 2, he easily potty trained at 3, he could tie his own shoes by age 4, he could ride a two wheeled bike (without training wheels) before he turned 5. Yet he could only sometimes write his letters and numbers forward; he always put his shoes on the wrong feet and he didn't know which way was right or left when turning his bike. At his Kindergarten registration, his teacher said he was ahead of all Kindergarten skills except one, rhyming. I told his Kindergarten teacher all of the above and more.

At Fall conferences, not much had changed with his writing or reading. His teacher told me it was developmental and that it was nothing to be concerned about. I shared with her that my husband has dyslexia. I shared that just about every male on his mother's side of the family has dyslexia and other learning disabilities. I expressed my concern and was told not to worry. By late November, I requested a PPT and full evaluation. The principal stood ready to deny my child the evaluation. I fought that.

The evaluations came back. Most scores in the superior or high average range except very specific weaknesses in editing, sight word efficiency, word finding, processing speed and coding. I was told, "He is a child with all of the signs and symptoms of dyslexia, however, we are not checking that box, because he is on grade level." He was struggling, was losing interest in reading, and now was beginning to dislike school. I was told he would be on SRBI, but was not told what tier. I was refused progress monitoring with anything other than what they were doing for all children, which were classroom assessments and the NWEA.

Next, I requested an Independent Evaluation. My child was diagnosed both dyslexic and dysgraphic. Again, my child was refused an IEP. The neuropsychologist specifically stated that he needed to be pulled out of class, taught individually, and have an Orton-Gillingham based reading program daily. Ridgefield Public Schools gave him a 504 plan with OT. Nowhere in the literature that I have read, does it state that OT remediates dyslexia or dysgraphia. However, it does very clearly state that Orton-Gillingham, Linda Mood Bell, Wilson, or any multi-sensory, explicit, systematic, phonics based approaches do work. My son was again placed on Tier 1 for reading intervention with his general education teacher.

Along the way, I have heard comments from a reading specialist, with whom he never worked, "He is a school kid. Don't worry." From a special education teacher in his school, who also has never worked with my child "Maybe he just isn't motivated."

It has been one year and almost five months of fighting. My child still doesn't have what he needs to learn. No one at the school is trained in remediating dyslexia. The Kindergarten teacher was clearly not trained in recognizing the signs of dyslexia, as she didn't know that a lack of rhyming is the most common and one of the earliest signs of dyslexia. The team is unable to diagnose dyslexia, due to their lack of training. A teacher with knowledge and tools

to meet the needs of children with dyslexia could have made a huge difference to his trajectory. According to experts, early intervention, as soon as a child is diagnosed, is key to creating success.

A teacher who receives training, while attending college, would save districts money, teachers time, decrease teacher and student burnout, instill the trust of parents and keep students from falling behind. All stakeholders, would have the knowledge to ensure a free appropriate education is provided.

Today, my son's educators refuse to provide services unless he has fallen one grade level behind. They are waiting for him to fail in school and on his current path, he will do just that.